

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

February 23rd, 2021

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday February 23rd, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate member Scott Lever were present. Shirley Canniff and Associate Member Sarah Carrier were not present for this meeting. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Cecily Miller & Mountain Biking Task Force

Members of the Public: Michael Ratner, Adam Glick, Alan Jones, Cara Hecker, Catherine Fenollosa, Cecily Miller, Chad Mikkelson, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Erin Fera, Evan Hecker, Evelyn Ginsparg, Gustavo Pardo, Henry Fenollosa, Ilana Knopf, Jeremy Gregory, Jimmy Yan, Jonathan Koopman, Josh Fenollosa, Joy Ahern, Julie McLaughlin, Kate Riley, Kristen Faiola, Lily Chung, Lindsay Bronstein, Lori Berenberg, Michael Ratner, Michael Tabacynski, Mustafa Varoglu, Nilou Moochhala, Pamela Cady, Richard Piazza, Richard Wolfe, Sarah Gurney, Susan Stein, & Zeke Brown.

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

N/A

Correspondence Received

N/A

Public Art Request – Menotomy Rocks Park or Crusher Lot – Cecily Miller

Cecily Miller of the Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture was present to discuss a public art request. This proposal comes to the Park and Recreation Commission after going through the Public Art process in Town. Ms. Miller spoke to the Commission about various community art projects around Town where individuals have been able to get involved. This includes projects like the yarn sculptures along the Minuteman Bikeway. Nilou Moochhala, the artist behind the proposed project, was present on the call. *Reflection on the Pandemic* is the proposed project's name. Ms. Moochhala has been living in Arlington for over a decade and is a practicing artist. She has been creating an abstract daily sketch since March 13th, 2020. These daily sketches focus on a wide variety of things that people have had to deal with during the pandemic. It was noted that they are looking to place the *Reflection on the Pandemic* project at Menotomy Rocks Park or Crusher Lot. Ms. Moochhala stated the project would be a series of flags hung throughout the property, with each having an individual sketch printed on it. These trail flags would be strung throughout the property from tree to tree. The installation of the art piece would be done in a safe manner and in collaboration with an arborist to ensure no damage was being done to these trees. Ms. Moochhala shared information of the history of trail flags and what they stand for. She also described that the second portion of this project would include a community interview aspect. A variety of video interviews would be conducted with members of the public. In these interviews, people would discuss their story and what it was like living through the pandemic. Video interviews would then be uploaded and stored in the Town's Library Online Video Archive.

Ms. Moochhala and Ms. Miller spoke on the proposed sites for the project, with Menotomy being the preferred location. They stated that this project can be observed by members of the public at any time, but will not be installed in a manner that encourages people to come in groups. This will be done in a way where a place people can reflect. It was noted that they would be interested in also implementing the use of river stones within the project. Painted river stones would be placed underneath the flags around the base of tree, with the goal of having sayings painted on them to share individual's voices from interviews. Ms. Miller stated that a Public Meeting was held and individuals were very enthusiastic about the proposed project. At this time, Ms. Miller shared statements from the Public Meeting's chat. Signage on social distancing would be included and a QR code to link individuals to information on the project. Ms. Moochhala stated that this is an opportunity to collect stories. For the other portion of the project, she plans to work with the Robbins Library to collect and archive these materials. She will be calling this portion "Letters from the Pandemics" which will consist of 15-20 minute Zoom calls. From this, an entire set of abstract art drawings will be created.

Ms. Mayer confirmed again with the Commission that this previously went through the public art process. She then asked if they were looking to place the project at only one site or both, which was confirmed to be only one location. Menotomy Rocks Park is the preferred location, as the artist believes the projects reach here will be better. Ms. Moochhala and Ms. Miller are looking to have the project in place from June through the end of August. Several months are being requested as a great deal of time and resources have gone into the creation of this project. Ms. Rothenberg thanked them both and believes this will be beautiful installation. Ms. Rothenberg stated that having it located at Menotomy Rocks is ideal, as it is a more central location in Town. Mr. Lasker agreed. He asked about the discrepancy in the projects timeline from what was outlined in the original permit. Ms. Miller stated the process of public art took longer and that they are currently waiting to hear back on a grant which they applied for. The request to push back the projects installation to June is to ensure they have enough time to get the printing of flags done and the community engagement aspect. This is a more realistic timeline.

Mr. Walker enjoyed the proposal, believing its installation will enhance the circle and create a place for a nice moment in woods. This is in addition to the community engagement aspect. Mr. Lever asked about maintenance. Ms. Miller said members will check in on it regularly. This is what they are doing on similar art installation on bike trail. Mr. Lever asked if Menotomy Rocks Park Friends have been contacted, which Ms. Miller confirmed. Mr. Lever suggested the possibility of funding through this group. Ms. Mayer asked if any community members on the call would like to speak on the project. Joy Ahern spoke on this. She asked about them being referenced previously as Buddhist flags. Ms. Moochhala said that this is not a religious project. However, prayer flags are relevant in many religions. This is a way to reflect on the current situation with COVID and to create an archive on these times. Ms. Mayer asked about QR code. It was stated that the presentation did not have a reference to this question regarding no prayers or religious involvement. Ms. Moochhala said they can be called mediation flags instead, to stay away from any religious concerns. Ms. Rothenberg asked about the proposed river stones, sharing concerns about the removal or misplacement of them (concerns of vandalism). Ms. Miller said that they were interested in hearing the Commissions thoughts on this aspect of the project. They came up with this idea as they were inspired by kindness stones. The goal of the stones in this project would be to send positive messages, having 20-25 stones onsite. They also discussed community members adding stones with their own messages. This was discussed with the Commission being unsure if this aspect of the project needed to be included. Ms. Moochhala stated that the flag request is the main part of the project and the stones could be removed if necessary. Mr. Connelly said it makes most sense to approve without river stones at this point in time. Mr. Connelly can speak with them after about bringing in stones at later time.

A resident made a comment in chat box, stating “In terms of art work in a more wooded area (Crusher Lot) I believe that it should be left in a natural state. Also when I see art work that consists of sticks and branches moved to expose bare ground, which is damaging habitat, for toads, salamanders etc.” Ms. Miller stated that their intention is to have no impact on the existing ecosystem. Ms. Moochhala said flags will be placed very high so no will be able to touch them or be injured.

Ms. Rothenberg made the motion to approve the *Reflection on the Pandemic* art installation project at Menotomy Rocks Park as discussed above. This motion was seconded by Mr. Walker. The Park and Recreation Commission voted to approve the proposed art installation at Menotomy Rocks Park, as discussed, with a vote of 4-0 at 7:46pm.

Ms. Miller and Ms. Moochhala will work with Mr. Connelly on the installation and ensured that no heavy equipment will be used to place the flags. Ms. Miller also noted that they will be working with an arborist on this.

Mountain Biking Working Group Recommendations

Commission Members Mr. Lasker and Mr. Walker served as the Commission Liaisons for the Mountain Biking Working Group. At this time, Mr. Lasker and Mr. Walker began to present on the Mountain Biking Task Forces findings over the last several months. Mr. Lasker began by discussing how this process came about. The discussion regarding mountain biking in Town began on July 14th, 2020 when resident Henry Fenollosa, 15 years old, proposed to the Commission the idea of having mountain biking features inside of the Crusher Lot. There was a great deal of interest from community members following this original discuss. This included both individuals who were in support of having mountain biking features in Town parks, specifically the Crusher lot, as well as individuals who were against it. With the amount of interest the topic was receiving and the divide in community member’s opinions, the Parks and Recreation Commission created the Mountain Biking Task Force.

This task force was made up of both proponents and opponents of formalized mountain biking in the Town of Arlington. Members of this group included Mr. Walker, Mr. Lasker, Henry Fenollosa (abutter, original proposer), Josh Fenollosa (abutter to Crusher Lot), Jonathan Koopmann (abutter to Crusher Lot, Works for Department of Transportation, cyclist and frequent user of parks), Adam Glick (lives near Crusher Lot & President of New England Mountain Biking Association), Lindsey Bronstein (lives near Crusher Lot and has no mountain biking experience), Joy Ahern (lives near Crusher Lot, avid cyclist, but against proposal), and Emily Sullivan (Town of Arlington).

The goal of this group was to identify if there were Recreation Department managed properties in Town that have the potential to serve as locations with mountain biking features. Their first action was to identify potential locations in Town that had this possibility. The Task force identified (4) locations. These sites include Menotomy Rocks Park, Hills Hill, Crusher Lot, and Turkey Hill. As a group, site walkthroughs occurred between August, 2020 – October, 2020 at each identified location to assess the potential of mountain biking. Following all (4) site visits, the task force group members came together to discuss their thoughts and findings. This process included each member completing a quantitative assessment survey to evaluate aspects. Aspects were divided into (4) core categories. The format of this survey and its questions can be found below:

	Crusher	Hill's Hill	Menotomy	Turkey Hill
Site visit held on	8/12/2020	9/11/2020	10/2/2020	10/28/2020
Access (e.g., a site with good access would have a 3 desirability, a site with limited access or access restrictions should be a 1 or 2)				
Factors to consider listed below:				
Does it have multiple points of access/gateways?				
Are there sidewalks/crosswalks adjacent to the site?				
Is the site accessible with a bike?				
Is there parking adjacent to the site for people traveling from other neighborhoods?				
Is the site accessible from the bike path?				
Is there a connection to other trail systems?				
Abutter impact (e.g., a site with no abutter issues would have a 3 desirability, a site that will cause a lot of issues should be a 1)				
Factors to consider listed below:				
How many sides of the site have direct abutters?				
Is there a vegetative buffer?				
Is there an active friends group?				
Constructability: the ability and effort involved (e.g., a site with easy constructability would have 3 desirability, a site with difficult constructability should be a 1)				
Factors to consider listed below:				
Can the existing site topography accommodate the following terrain?				
Beginner				
Intermediate				
Advanced				
Can the existing site topography/square footage accommodate the following features?				
Pump track				
Jump line				
Skills park				
Flow trails				
Technical (TTF)				
Picnic area				
Setting /Context (e.g., a site with a good setting/context would have 3 desirability, a site with a challenging setting/context should be a 1)				
Factors to consider listed below:				
Is the site compatible with existing trail inventory?				
Does the site have any Conservation Commission resource impacts?				
Does the site have active or passive recreation?				
Are there adjacent site amenities? (restrooms, bike racks, trash receptacles, etc.)				
TOTAL	0	0	0	0

Mr. Walker and Mr. Lasker discussed the results of this survey. At each location, they looked at a variety of existing amenities (parking, restrooms, trashcans, etc.), as well as the potential for future amenities. Mr. Lasker reported that the clear front runner from the survey result was Hill's Hill, which the task force believes has the best potential to support mountain biking features. The results of the survey had Hill's Hill leading all categories except constructability. Hill's Hill is also centrally located in Town. Mr. Lasker then covered the summary points of their findings. They are as follows:

- Cycling, including mountain biking, is a permissible activity on all existing multi-use trails and in all property under the jurisdiction of the PRC.
- Trail building of any kind, for any use, is not allowed without the permission of the PRC.
- Survey data showing Hill's Hill as a preferred location does not preclude the development of features in other locations to provide equal access to multiple neighborhoods.
- The task force, during their site visits, identified opportunities for mountain biking features and trails at each location.
- The task force recommends the FY2022 PRC feasibility study money be used towards the design and development of the Hill's Hill site for mountain biking features and trails.

Mr. Lasker emphasized that a feature point that the task force came together on is that there is the potential to have different mountain biking features at different locations in Town. At this time, each task force member had the opportunity to individually speak and share their thoughts on the process. Comments are as follows:

Josh Fenollosa: Mr. Fenollosa stated that the process was unique and it was very exciting for him to look at the potential of each site. He believes these findings will help with feasibility study and the potential to have features in Town in the future. Mr. Fenollosa is looking forward to seeing what happens moving forward.

Henry Fenollosa: Mr. Fenollosa thought it was amazing that the Commission and Town listened to his original request and that this discussion & the task force stemmed from this. Ms. Mayer said that Henry did not present himself very well. He came to the Commission with passion and a true idea, presenting him very well.

Jonathan Koopmann: Mr. Koopmann thanked everyone for being a part of the task force. Honest and open dialog. Wanted the public know many different voices and standpoints discussed. Mr. Koopmann was glad that he could come together to make a recommendation.

Lindsey Bronstein: Ms. Bronstein thanked everyone and was glad to be a part of the process. She was very happy to see that Hill's Hill was the recommendation as it has a great deal of features including access to parking, the bike trail, etc.

Joy Ahern: Ms. Ahern was an opponent of having mountain biking features in the Crusher Lot. Ms. Ahern was originally happy when local children started to use the space in bike in the Crusher Lot. However, this changed when features began to be built without formal permission. Ms. Ahern praised Henry's idea and his passion for the sport. She had concerns with biking in Crusher Lot would become too big and would talk away from current users. She stated that she was glad that people have listened to each other and discussed all points of view. Ms. Ahern said the process went well and everyone was very civil. She likes the idea of multi-use properties in Town and was glad to be a part of the task force.

Adam Glick: Mr. Glick stated that it was fantastic that the Town listened to Henry's original thoughts. He emphasized that over time the Town needs to commit to mountain biking if they are going to move forward. This would be making the sport accessible at other places besides Hill's Hill. Mr. Glick does believe it is possible to create safe trails at the Crusher Lot in the future and hope the Commission keeps this in mind. Hill's Hill is an ideal location due to its current use and the ability to create features for multiple skill levels.

Ms. Rothenberg commented on these statements, saying that she is grateful for the time and effort her fellow Commissioners and other individuals put into this process. This was an important process and a great example on how to get things done and be respectful of others. She hopes to continue to monitor activity at the Crusher Lot area. Mr. Lever agreed and thanked everyone for their efforts.

At this time, community members present on the call had the chance to speak. Erin Fera is a member of the Friends of Crusher Lot Group and thanked everyone for their hard work. She shared concerns regarding biking in the Crusher Lot and issues around having multiple use trails. Ms. Mayer stated that this discussion should focus on the Hill's Hill recommendation. Evelyn Ginsparg asked what will happen with jumps made in Crusher Lot without permission and if they will be removed. Ms. Mayer stated that needs to be separate discussion. Mr. Connelly stated for this to be removed, they would need to access every trail in Town and remove all other unauthorized work and features. Ms. Mayer stated that they have not determined how to move forward with existing trails and jumps at this time. An item to note was that the final

slide of the presentation reiterated that activity cannot be done on Town land without permission. Mustafa Varoglu stated he is happy of the potential to have an area in Town solely for mountain biking, as this would be great for Arlington. Ilana Knopf stated that it is great to have multiuse trails and support different interests in Town. She supports the project and stated that shared trail use should be considered. Zeke Brown asked about potential specific features at Hills Hill and what could be made there vs. the Crusher Lot property. Mr. Connelly stated Hill's Hill is an ideal location as it has a number of positives (parking lot, restroom access at rink, Minuteman Bikeway, playground, area needs to be cleaned up, currently not used/supervised, etc.). Mr. Lasker said the next part of the process would be to start looking at potential features. He stated there is a lot of varied terrain and the potential to build features for multiple skill levels. Mr. Glick commented on this and confirmed that there is opportunity for different age groups and skill levels. Mr. Glick also spoke on his thoughts to have trails at Crusher Lot as well. This included pros like its terrain and proximity to the Middle School in Town. Mr. Lasker noted that Mass Ave splits Arlington and could make it difficult to have individuals access the property from the other side of Town.

Kristen Faiola said that she appreciates everyone's efforts, the assessment, and survey that were done. She is able to see the benefits of each of these locations. After watching kids bike in the Crusher Lot over the last year, she realizes the benefit of having access to mountain biking in Town. Ms. Faiola asked for clarification where mountain biking is allowed in Town. Ms. Mayer said this activity is allowed on Town trails. Intentional alterations to the space or physical trails are not allowed. Zeke Brown referenced Henry's previous comment regarding trail building being an organic outlet. It was just as much of building trail as it was just as much as it riding. Mr. Brown asked if there would be a provision that allows kids to make own trails. Mr. Connelly believes that is a great point and can add this into the design phase where certain elements can be worked by user to have creativity. Mr. Lasker stated this was discussed with task force. He thinks about this potential like looking at a community garden, where users have the freedom for creativity. Mr. Lasker also made a point that this will serve as an activity for Middle School age students, stating that there are so many playgrounds in Town for kids up to 12 years old. There is not much for ages 13+ and this will serve as a great activity for this age group. Henry Fenollosa stated that the trail building aspect was very important to his friends and him. They have a love for the sport. However as previously stated, a large part is the creativity and building aspect. His friend and he spent almost more time building than riding. Over the last year, the opportunities around mountain biking has allowed him to learn new skills (biking and building), made new friends, and spend time outside. The building aspect is just as, if not more, important than riding.

At this time, Ms. Rothenberg made the motion for the Commission to vote on moving forward with the Department using its FY22 Feasibility Funding to complete a Mountain Biking Feasibility Study at the Hill's Hill property. This recommendation is based off the finding of the Mountain Biking Task Force and their research over the last several months. Mr. Lasker seconded this motion. The Park and Recreation Commission voted to approve the recommendation to put forward the Department's FY22 feasibility study funding for a Mountain Biking Feasibility Study at Hill's Hill, as discussed, with a vote of 4-0 at 8:48pm.

Mr. Walker and Mr. Lasker thanked everyone for their time and efforts. Ms. Mayer thanked everyone on the task for and that was involved.

Capital Project Updates

Reservoir Phase II Building Project

Mr. Connelly reported that the Reservoir Phase II Building Project is approaching the building phase. Construction meetings are occurring and the contractor, JJ Cardosi, is in the process of creating a logistics plan which will be shared with the Commission. Mr. Connelly also reported that a site walk occurred today with (13) contractors interested in submitting bids for the overall Phase 2 Reservoir Beach Project. KZLA was present for this walk around.

Hill Hill Playground ADA project

N/A

CPA Requests & Capital Plan Discussion

Mr. Connelly stated that a discussion occurred regarding CPA and Capital Plan funding for Recreation projects. Capital's funding plan for recreation did not reflect what Recreation had. For Recreation's planning purposes, they are looking to come up with an agreed upon figure. Mr. Connelly stated that more information on this would be coming. Ms. Mayer stated that CPA has completed its hearings for FY22 funding. As of the Committees last meeting, it appears that the amount that

Recreation has requested will be approved. It was noted that previously awarded projects to others did not fully use their approved CPA funding.

Rink ADA Spectator Seating

N/A

Task Group Updates: Field Policy, Town Wide Playground

Mr. Connelly reported that several meetings have occurred with the Field Policy working group. Individuals in this working group are currently reviewing the draft field policy.

Recreation and Rink Updates

Registration for all spring and summer programs opened online Monday, February 8th at 8:00pm. Mr. Vaillette reported that over \$400,000 of revenue has been collected since this time. There have been over 3,600 unique program registrations for the upcoming spring and summer programs. Recreation continues to plan for these programs including summer camp and the Reservoir Beach operation.

Approval of Minutes – 1/26/21 & 2/9/2021

The approval of Meeting Minutes from both the January 26th, 2021 and February 9th, 2021 Park and Recreation Commission Meetings were discussed. The only item noted for edit was on the 2/9/21 Minutes, the Task Force Section heading states “Fields” only. “Mountain Biking” should be also included in the heading as well.

The motion to approve the January 26th, 2021 Minutes as is and the February 9th, 2021 Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes, as amended, was made by Mr. Lasker. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. The Commission voted to approve both sets of Minutes with a vote of 5-0, at 9:01pm.

Comments and Items for Future Meetings: Next Meeting March 9th, 2021

- Fitness and Arts in Parks State of Emergency Program Extension – 3/9/2021
- Tufts OTD Student Project Update – 3/9/2021
- Bike Rack Placement Recommendation Review
- Field Policy (2nd Meeting in March)

Other

Mr. Walker made the motion to adjourn the meeting. This motion was seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 4-0, at 9:03pm. The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.